

MONTANA HISTORIC PROPERTY RECORD

For the Montana National Register of Historic Places Program and State Antiquities Database

Montana State Historic Preservation Office
Montana Historical Society
PO Box 201202, 1301 E Lockey
Helena, MT 59620-1202

Property Address: **663 N. Ewing**

Historic Address (if applicable): **663 N. Ewing**

City/Town: **Helena**

Site Number: **24LC2441**

(An historic district number may also apply.)

County: **Lewis and Clark**

Historic Name: **Benjamin Franklin and Florence A Hooper Residence**

Original Owner(s): **Benjamin Franklin Hooper**

Current Ownership Private Public

Current Property Name:

Owner: **Mohr, Jason and Albertson, Becky**

Owner Address: **663 N. Ewing St., Helena, MT 59601**

Phone:

Legal Location

PM: **Montana** Township: **10 N** Range: **03 W**

$\frac{1}{4}$ $\frac{1}{4}$ **SW** $\frac{1}{4}$ of Section: **30**

Lot(s): **B, COS #396507**

Block(s): **9**

Addition: **Chessman and Davis Central (a.k.a. Central No. 1)** Year of Addition: **1884 (re-platted 1986)**

USGS Quad Name: **Helena** Year: **1992**

Historic Use: **DOMESTIC/single family**

Current Use: **DOMESTIC/single family**

Construction Date: **1886** Estimated Actual

Original Location Moved Date Moved:

UTM Reference www.nris.mt.gov

NAD 27 or NAD 83(preferred)

Zone: **12 T** Easting: **421054.03** Northing: **5160367.34**

Geocode: **05-1888-30-4-20-33-0000**

National Register of Historic Places

NRHP Listing Date:

Historic District:

NRHP Eligible: Yes No

Date of this document: **8/22/2016**

Form Prepared by: **Delia Hagen**

Address: **660 River Court, Missoula, MT 59801**

Daytime Phone: **(406) 360-0120**

MT SHPO USE ONLY

Eligible for NRHP: yes no

Criteria: A B C D

Date: **8/23/2016**

Evaluator: **Kate Hampton**

Comments: Identifying Montana's African American Heritage Places Project.

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Architectural Description

Property Name: Benjamin Franklin and Florence A Hooper Residence

Site Number: 24LC2441

ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION

Architectural Style: **Other:** If Other, specify:
Property Type: **Residential** Specific Property Type: **Single-family dwelling**
Architect: **unknown** Architectural Firm/City/State:
Builder/Contractor: **unknown** Company/City/State:
Source of Information:

The modest National Folk-style Hooper Residence occupies a grassy, nearly three-lot parcel in the historic neighborhood east of Helena's downtown. The building faces northwest onto North Ewing Street, and sits approximately 30 feet from the street, and 16 feet from the city sidewalk. A concrete path leads from the sidewalk to the house, and a two-car gravel parking area occupies the parcel's southwest corner. Historic iron fencing parallels the city sidewalk, while modern chain link defines the north edge and the north side of the east edge of the parcel. Tall vertical wood privacy fencing surrounds the south yard and divides the north yard. Two small, modern, metal storage sheds, one gambrel and the other gable-roofed, stand at the property's northeast corner.

The one-story wood-frame residence sports a hipped roof and hipped full-width, shallow front porch. After 1958, an addition to the rear (east) elongated the original rectangular footprint. The addition also extends slightly past the south elevation plane. Resting on a stone and concrete wall foundation, the original building is clad with wavy asbestos shingle siding while wide composite board siding covers the addition, and asphalt T-lock shingles shroud the roof. Five small metal vents/stovepipes punctuate the roof's north slope, a single stovepipe appears high in the south slope, and a single small hipped dormer provides light to the attic from the center of the east slope. Stacked cove trim serves as a simple cornice around the original roofline. Original one-over-one double-hung windows are found throughout the historic building.

(For ease of description, we refer to the northwest elevation as the west, the northeast as the north, the southeast as the east, and the southwest as the south.)

West (front) elevation:

Accessed via four wood steps, a shallow, hip-roofed, wood-frame, open porch stretches across the façade, featuring wood board decking and square posts. Obscured by a metal gutter across the west side, simple coved trim comprises the porch cornice. White vinyl lattice fills the spaces between the porch deck's wood structural frame. The house's façade displays single one-over-one double-hung windows on either side of the centered door. Dimensional wood trim surrounds each opening. A pressed metal, two-light, x-panel storm protects the one-light, multi-panel wood entry door.

North (side) elevation:

The north elevation contains four window openings: three evenly spaced across the original bay, and a single, centered, fixed, one light modern window within the shed addition. Within the original bay, single one-over-one double-hungs appear at center and to the west, while the east side's opening holds a smaller, narrow, wood-frame, one-light casement.

South (side) elevation:

The original building's south elevation contains a single, centered one-over-one double hung as well as a one-by-one wood-frame slider to the east. A single, centered, fixed, one light modern window sits within the shed addition.

East (rear) elevation:

The modern shed addition obscures the original buildings east elevation, except of the roof's east slope which contains a single one-by-one fixed window. A pair of sliding one-light, metal-framed patio doors provide access from the addition's south side, while a metal-frame one-over-one window occupies the north side.

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History of Property

Property Name: Benjamin Franklin and Florence A Hooper Residence

Site Number: 24LC2441

HISTORY OF PROPERTY

This property was first platted in 1884 as Lots 9 through 12 of Block 9 of the Chessman and Davis Central Addition, along the southeast side of N. Ewing Street, southwest of its intersection with E. 13th Street. Tax records indicate the current house was built in 1885, and by 1889 city directories listed the occupant of 663 N. Ewing as one Benjamin Franklin Hooper. When the Sanborn Fire Insurance Company first mapped the neighborhood in 1892, it showed the extant one-story frame dwelling with front and rear porches and attached shed at 663 N. Ewing. At the time it was owned as well as occupied by Hooper, an African-American man who'd purchased the property from Davis and Chessman, acquiring lots 11 and 12 in 1886 (as well as lots 13 and 14 in 1891). The Hooper family would own the property for almost 60 years.

When Hooper bought the property on N. Ewing he was about 40 years old, and was beginning to form a new family. In 1887, Hooper, who'd been born in Maryland of an African father, married Ohio-born Florence A. Jackson, 27, in Lewis and Clark County.¹ About 5 years later, ca. 1892, the couple had a daughter, Ruth E. In these early years, Hooper worked as a "calciminer" who did "white washing and general jobbing" out of his business establishment at 121 Breckenridge. In subsequent years Hooper dabbled in other occupations. In 1903, city directories listed him living at 663 N. Ewing (rear) and working as a grocer at 667 N. Ewing, and five years later directories identified him as a janitor.

When census takers enumerated the family in 1910, Benjamin had returned to working as a "Kalsominer" who also did "odd jobs." Although Sanborn Maps portray it as a single-family dwelling, the Hoopers' home likely served as something of a duplex at this time, as it seems to have long done (note the earlier identification of Hooper as living in the "rear" of 663 Ewing). In 1910, other members of Helena's African-American community were also enumerated at 663 N. Ewing by census takers. These included Samuel Legrand, a thirty-two-year-old hotel cook from South Carolina, and Benjamin F. Leman, a thirty-two-year-old sleeping car porter from Kansas. Additional people, like Austin Sharpley, W. Gancey, and Eldon Simons, may also have lived at the address at that time.

In 1920, Ben Hooper, 74, was still working (painting buildings) and living at 663 N. Ewing with Florence. Ben died in 1927, and by 1930 the Hoopers' daughter Ruth, 38, (who had married James Callender in 1918 and then, after being widowed, married Edward Harrison, from whom she was later divorced, in 1938) and had moved back in with her mother.² Ruth worked as a "stock girl" in a department store to support the household. By then, sometime since 1892, the attached shed had been torn down and a detached one-car garage with wings had been completed. Both women remained at 663 N. Ewing in 1940 (Ruth still worked as a "stock girl"), and the following year Florence deeded lots 11-14 to her daughter.

At the same time, in 1941, Ruth acquired the north ½ of lot 9 and all of lot 10 from Ray and Geneva Miller and then deeded lots 13 & 14, and the north part of lot 12, to Otto Samson two months later. Ruth died shortly thereafter and in 1945 the estate of Ruth Hooper Harrison conveyed 663 N. Ewing, comprising the north 1/2 of Lot 9, lots 10 & 11, and the south 19 feet of Lot 12, to Edward Harrison, "a single man of Missoula MT," presumably Ruth's son. Edward kept the property only a few months, conveying it to C.A. and Dena F. Rost that same year. The Rost family would own the property for 34 years.

In 1979, the estate of Dena Rost Franzen conveyed 663 N. Ewing to Patrick and Mary Carpenter. The Carpenters modified the house—completing a "lower open porch" in 1984—and in 1986, when the Chessman and Davis Central Addition was re-platted as Central Addition #1, they filed an amended plat. The house at 663 N. Ewing thereafter sat on Lot B of COS #396507, which contained the west 80 feet of lots 10 and 11, as well as the west 80 feet of the north half of lot 9 and the south part of lot 12. Shortly thereafter, Carpenter deeded Lot B to James T. Nichols, who conveyed it to Iva

¹ Hooper's father is elsewhere described as being born "on sea."

² Sources are contradictory, and some indicate Ruth was widowed rather than divorced.

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History of Property

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Dell Zang in late 1988. Six years later, Zang transferred the property to Donna Trahan, who owned it just three years before deeding to Christopher and Danielle McCarthy in 1997. Anna Huack and Kristin Olson acquired it from the McCarthys in 2005, and in 2009 conveyed it to the current owner occupants, Jason Mohr and Becky Albertson.

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Information Sources/Bibliography

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INFORMATION SOURCES/BIBLIOGRAPHY

Ancestry.com, various military and death records

Bureau of the Census. "9th Census of the United States, 1870: Population Schedules: Montana, Lewis and Clark County." Washington, D.C.: Bureau of the Census, 1870.

———. "13th Census of the United States, 1910: Population Schedules: Montana, Lewis and Clark County." Washington, D.C.: Bureau of the Census, 1910.

———. "15th Census of the United States, 1930: Population Schedules: Montana, Lewis and Clark County." Washington, D.C.: Bureau of the Census, 1930.

Hagen, Delia. "National Register of Historic Places Multiple Property Documentation Form: African- American Heritage Places in Helena, MT," 2016.

Helena, City of, Town Plats

1884 Chessman and Davis Central Addition

1986 Central Addition No. 1

1986 COS #396507

Lewis and Clark, County of. Clerk and Recorder's Office, property title records.

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R.L. Polk & Co. *Polk's Helena City Directory*. Helena, Mont.: R.L. Polk & Co.

Sanborn Map Company. "Fire Insurance Maps of Montana: Helena, Lewis and Clark County- 1884." Bethesda, MD: University Publications of America, 1884.

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———. "Fire Insurance Maps of Montana: Helena, Lewis and Clark County- 1930." Bethesda, MD: University Publications of America, 1930.

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Statement of Significance

Property Name: Benjamin Franklin and Florence A Hooper Residence

Site Number: 24LC2441

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES

NRHP Listing Date:

NRHP Eligibility: Yes No Individually Contributing to Historic District Noncontributing to Historic District

NRHP Criteria: A B C D

Area of Significance: **Ethnic Heritage & Social History** Period of Significance: **1886-1945**

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Purchased in 1886 by Benjamin Franklin Hooper, the Hooper house is significant under NRHP Criterion A (local level) as a residential property associated with the history of African-American people in Helena, MT. Benjamin Hooper was for years a prominent member of the local black community—he served, for instance, as a leader of the Afro-American Republican Club and alternate delegate to the Republican county convention (1894), bondsman for Mrs. James Ingram when she had legal troubles (1906), member of one of Helena’s two “colored” Masonic lodges (1907), vice-president of the black Good Citizens Movement (1911), and honorary pallbearer at the funeral of Miles York (1925), among other things. With his wife Florence and their daughter Ruth, Hooper owned and occupied 663 N. Ewing until he died in 1927. His widow Florence conveyed the property to daughter Ruth in 1941 and it subsequently passed to Ruth’s son, Edward Harrison. Edward owned it only briefly, selling it the same year he acquired it in 1945, when the local black community, which peaked ca. 1910, had long been in decline. The Hooper house is thus associated with two significant historic contexts: its black owner-occupants lived there during the heyday of Helena’s, and Montana’s, African-American community, ca. 1875-1910, and they sold their home and left it after the deep community decline that followed, ca. 1910-1940. The property’s period of significance is the period during which it was owned and occupied by African-American people, ie. 1886-1945.

The Hooper house represents these significant historic themes in a number of specific ways. Although black households clustered in several neighborhoods, Helena, like other western cities, did not suffer the strict residential segregation that was common in other regions, and black households could be found in areas across the city, like N. Ewing Street. Like many black families in Helena, the home’s owners took in boarders to help make ends meet and provide lodging to the African-American community. Hooper’s economic and political activities were also representative of black Helena. His work as a laborer and janitors was prototypical for black men, who in this period were oft-confined by structural racism to low-status, low-waged work. Paradoxically, this same population tended to be highly educated and politically active, taking active roles in their community and its institutions, many of which focused on “racial uplift” and combatting racism in its many forms.

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Integrity

Property Name: Benjamin Franklin and Florence A Hooper Residence

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INTEGRITY (location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, association)

The Hooper Residence displays a degree of integrity sufficient to convey its historic associations with Helena's African American community during the first half of the twentieth century. Its design and workmanship is compromised only by a shed addition to the rear of the house, and the introduction of mid-century asbestos shingle siding. Still a single family residence in a historic neighborhood, the property retains its integrity of setting, feeling, and association.

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Photographs

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Feature #
Facing: NE

Description: West (front) and south elevations. Photo by Kate Hampton, 2016.



Feature #
Facing: SE

Description: North and west elevations. Photo by Kate Hampton, 2016

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Photographs

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(above) View to the north, showing south elevation of original house. Photo by Kate Hampton, 2016.



View to southwest, detail of east slope dormer (roof of modern metal shed in foreground). Photo: Kate Hampton, 2016.

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Photographs

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View to southwest, east elevation of modern addition. Photo by Kate Hampton, 2016.

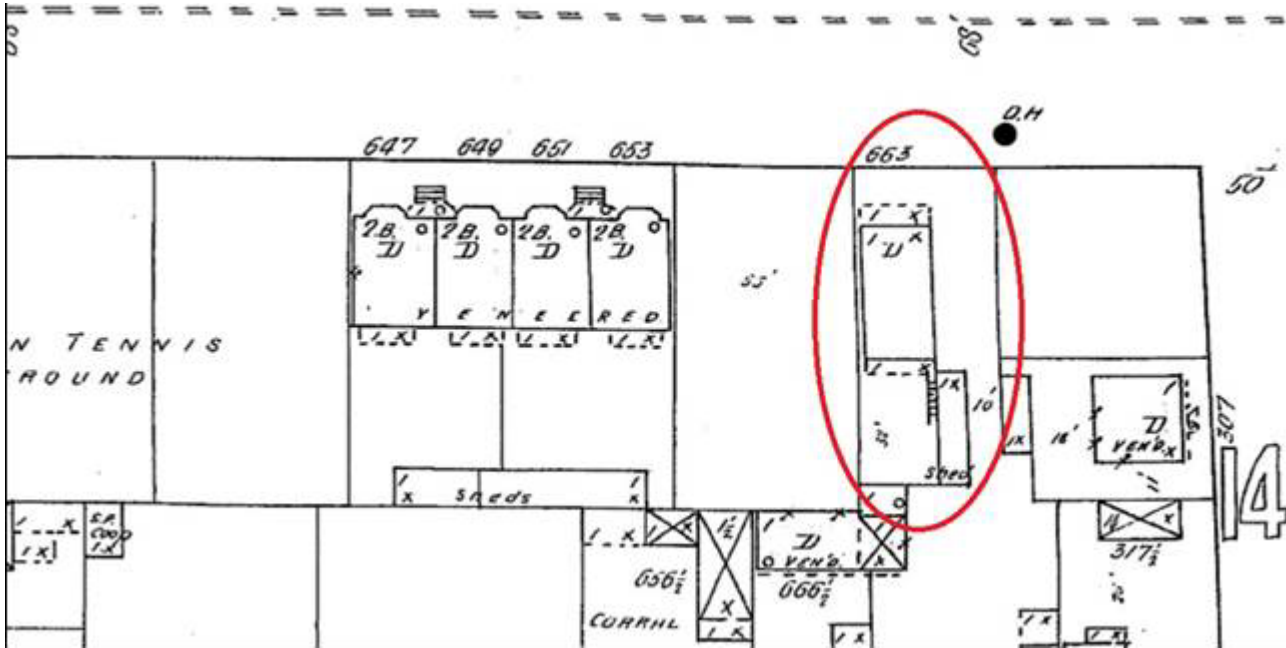
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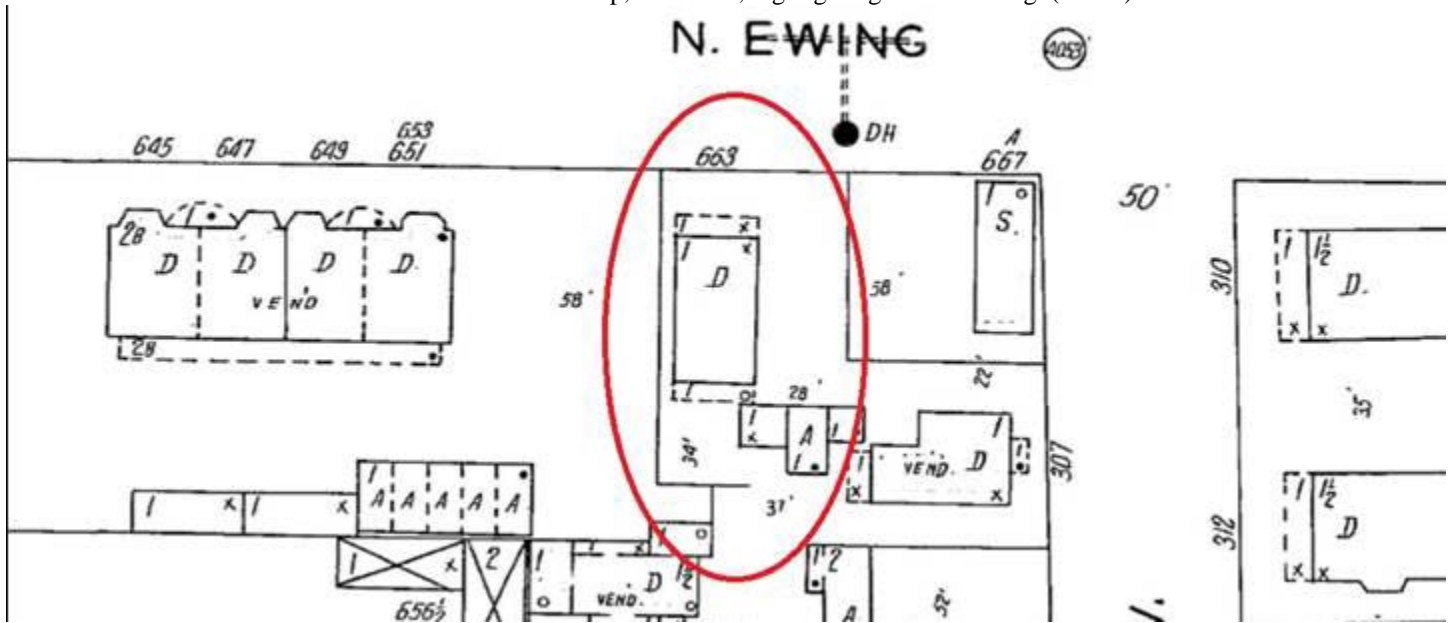
Sanborn Maps

Property Name: Benjamin Franklin and Florence A Hooper Residence

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Detail of 1892 Sanborn Map, Sheet 13, highlighting 663 N. Ewing. (above)
Detail of 1930 Sanborn Map, sheet 119, highlighting 663 N. Ewing. (below)



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Sanborn Maps

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Property:

663 N Ewing, Helena, MT 59601

Lewis and Clark County

Geocode: 05-1888-30-4-20-33-0000

UTM: Zone 12 / 421054.03 E / 51560367.34 N

Lat: 46.592230 / Long: -112.030605

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Topographic Map

Property Name: Benjamin Franklin and Florence A Hooper Residence

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Property:

663 N Ewing, Helena, MT 59601

Lewis and Clark County

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